

7th February 1924]

Mr. K. PRABHAKARAN TAMPAN :—“ May I also ask, Sir, whether the matter was brought to the notice of the Forest Committee and their advice taken ? ”

The hon. Sir ARTHUR KNAPP :—“ Not so far as I am aware, Sir.”

Grazing fees in the Anchetti and Denkanikottah ranges of the Salem district.

209 Q.—Rao Sahib S. ELLAPPA CHETTIYAR : Will the hon. the Home Member be pleased to state—

(1) whether the grazing fees for cows and buffaloes have recently been doubled in the Anchetti and Denkanikottah ranges of the Salem district ;

(2) whether it is also a fact that in addition to this doubling of fees, the grazing is permitted *only on certain restrictions* and in only particular blocks from time to time ;

(3) whether it is a fact that the block system of grazing is hard on the men and cattle in the locality ;

(4) whether there is any block system now in force in the Bhavani and Kollegal taluks of Coimbatore district ; and

(5) whether the Government have any intention of abolishing the block system as a special case in this district ?

A.—(1) No.

(2) Grazing is allowed subject to certain restrictions. Certain blocks are closed for grazing.

(3) The Government have received no complaints to this effect.

(4) No.

(5) No such proposal is under consideration.

The ‘ Shrub and fuel forest ’.

210 Q.—Mr. M. RATNASWAMI : Will the hon. the Home Member be pleased to state the total area of the class of forest land known as ‘ Shrub and fuel forest ’ ?

A.—‘ Shrub and fuel forests ’ are not a recognized class of forests and it is not, therefore, possible to give the information asked for.

Jails.

The late Pandit Vaj Pai.

211 Q.—Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR : Will the hon. the Home Member be pleased to state—

(a) if the Government have received any report about the death of Pandit Vaj Pai ;

(b) whether they got any report about the state of his health before his death and, if so, when was the first report received ;

(c) whether the Government have any objection to place the whole correspondence on the table or, if that cannot be done, to issue a communiqué regarding his sentence, stay at the jail and death ?

A.—(a) Yes.

(b) No.

(c) There has not been any correspondence on the subject. If the hon. Member specifies any point on which he desires information, it will be furnished if possible.

[7th February 1924]

Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—“ Will the Government be pleased to call for information regarding the state of his health just before his death ? ”

The hon. Sir ARTHUR KNAPP :—“ We have the information, Sir. But if the hon. Member's intention in clause (b) of his question is to ask exactly when Government received the first report about the state of his health, I shall look up the papers, Sir.”

Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—“ It does not matter when the information was got and as to what period it had reference. We want all informations about his health to be published whether they were received before or after his death.”

Mr. C. RAMALINGA REDDI :—“ Sir, I suppose this is a case in which he was sent to jail under security proceedings. I should like to ask the hon. the Home Member whether he at any time received a report from the Superintendent of the Jail to the effect that his health was very serious and that it would be ridiculous to keep him in jail under security proceedings.”

The hon. Sir ARTHUR KNAPP :—“ As I have already explained, Sir, clause (b) is an inquiry whether at the time of the prisoner's death Government received any report from the jail as to his health. The answer is ‘ No ’.”

Mr. C. RAMALINGA REDDI :—“ This is a very important matter, Sir. The prisoner died the day after he was sent out of jail. Surely the death would not have occurred so suddenly ; for some time past he was mere skin and bones . . . ”

The hon. Sir ARTHUR KNAPP :—“ This is not a supplementary question. This is a speech.”

Mr. C. RAMALINGA REDDI :—“ I should like to ask the hon. the Home Member whether it was not the duty of the Superintendent of the Prison to inform the Government as to the state of his health and leave to them the responsibility of keeping him there or letting him go.”

The hon. Sir ARTHUR KNAPP :—“ I may refer the hon. Member to the Jail Manual wherein the duties of a Superintendent are laid down. He does not report to the Government unless there is an urgent necessity to release the prisoner and if he thinks that he is not likely to recover if he is released.”

Diwan Bahadur P. KESAVA PILLAI :—“ Is there no provision in the Jail Code that if there is no hope of recovery for a prisoner he should be released ? ”

The hon. Sir ARTHUR KNAPP :—“ Speaking within my recollection, Sir, the Superintendent reports to Government about the ill-health of a prisoner only when his recovery is likely if he is released.”

Mr. C. RAMALINGA REDDI :—“ If I am wrong, my hon. Friend will correct me. I was under the impression that in the case of a man who had been confined in prison under security proceedings, it was the duty of the Superintendent to inform the Government that his health was bad, that he was not capable of any more mischief and that he might be released.”

The hon. Sir ARTHUR KNAPP :—“ I am aware of no such thing, Sir. In any case he could have obtained the release by giving the security.”

7th February 1924]

Mr. C. RAMALINGA REDDI :—“ So far as my information goes, he refused to do so acting under a principle, with which we may not agree. But it is obvious from our own Jail Code that some amount of humanity is expected to be shown ? ”

The hon. Sir ARTHUR KNAPP :—“ A great deal of humanity is exercised in these cases.”

Mr. C. RAMALINGA REDDI :—“ If there is no such provision, will the Home Member kindly consider the advisability of the adoption of such a provision, especially when it is most absurd to keep a man in such a condition there ? ”

The hon. Sir ARTHUR KNAPP :—“ On a point of order, Sir, I may say that the hon. Member may bring in a resolution to alter the Jail Manual to that effect.”

Sriman SASIBHUSHANA RATH Mahasayo :—“ Was not Vaj Pai in a special division of the jail ? ”

Mr. C. RAMALINGA REDDI :—“ I shall add only one question, Sir, so that my hon. Friend may answer both. In view of the very painful impression produced by this case, will my hon. Friend be pleased to examine the case in the light of the discussion now proceeding, so that in future at any rate no such thing will occur ? ”

The hon. Sir ARTHUR KNAPP :—“ I am quite prepared to accept the suggestion in the first few words. I am prepared to examine the matter.”

Political prisoners in the Presidency.

212 Q.—Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR : Will the hon. the Home Member and the hon. the Law Member be pleased—

(i) to give a list of the political prisoners in this Presidency with the nature of their offences and sentences ; and

(ii) (a) to state whether the Government have issued any orders for treating the political prisoners differently from others and, if so, whether the Government have any objection to publish the papers connected with those orders ;

(b) if no such orders have already been passed, whether the Government have any objection to form a Committee to frame some rules on the subject ?

A.—(i) There is no separate classification of convicts under the heading ‘ Political Prisoners ’. The number of persons in jails on 26th December 1923 undergoing imprisonment for offences committed against the State was 14.

(ii) (a) No. But in G.O. No. 1401, Judicial, dated 12th December 1922 (which has been placed on Editors’ Table), the Government called the attention of all magistrates and criminal courts to the powers they possess of nominating certain prisoners for imprisonment in a special division.

(b) The Government are not prepared to form such a Committee.